



Residents concerned over proposed freeway path

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Some Southwest Valley residents are skeptical that the Arizona Department of Transportation had done enough to consider a proposed freeway's impact on existing homes.

Under questioning from the audience at a public meeting Thursday night, ADOT officials said the proposed Arizona 801 alignment endorsed by Avondale and other Southwest Valley cities would cost more and impact more existing homes.

Timothy Tait, ADOT community relations project manager, urged the audience not to think of the freeway exclusively as a "dollars and cents" issue.

"It should be what's in the best interest of the (Valley-wide) community," Tait told more than 100 people at Desert Edge High School in Goodyear.

George Tewksbury, a Maricopa County resident whose house of nearly three decades is in the Avondale-favored path, felt the decision had already been made.

"They (Avondale) didn't worry about where we're at, they worried about the future," Tewksbury, 57, said.

At issue is whether a portion of the proposed Arizona 801, from about Litchfield Road to near 99th Avenue, would run south of Broadway Road, the northern alignment, or south of Southern Avenue, the southern alignment.

The east-west freeway would run roughly parallel with Interstate 10 from Arizona 85 to the proposed Loop 202. There would also be an interchange at the proposed Loop 303.

Avondale officials favor the southern alignment, bypassing a planned housing development. City officials said the northern alignment would bisect the master-planned community and could create a "south of the tracks" problem.

Tewksbury said Avondale's argument was unconvincing and the route should be determined by

cost rather than by an effort to preserve planned developments.

Several people in the crowd said their houses likely were in the path of the Arizona 801 and attended in hopes of understanding the project timeline.

Construction on Arizona 801, which would be funded by a 2004 voter-approved half-cent sales tax, is slated to begin after 2020.

The alignment recommendation is expected this summer.

Tait said ADOT was planning the freeway far in advance in hopes of dedicating a known corridor to accelerate the project if needed.

Meanwhile, widening projects on I-10, the Southwest Valley's main artery, are scheduled to begin this year.

Angela Cotera, 43, of Avondale, was one of the few who expressed concern about traffic on I-10, the Southwest Valley's primary artery.

"The west side is always thought of last, and we're just hurting" for better transportation, Cotera said.

What do you think?

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